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COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
Third session
Geneva, 12 May 1997
Item 1 of the provisional agenda

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Provisional agenda

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

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6. Role and activities of the Commission regarding the coordination of science and technology for development

7. Election of the Chairperson and other officers for the fourth session of the Commission

8. Provisional agenda and organization of work of the fourth session of the Commission

9. Other matters

10 Adoption of the report of the Commission on its third session.

GE.97-50412

Annotations

Item 1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

The provisional agenda and documentation for the third session of the Commission were approved by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1995 in decision 1995/237.

It should be noted that the Commission, at its second session, elected its Bureau for the third session. The Bureau is thus composed of the following:

Chairperson: J. George Waardenburg (Netherlands)

Vice-Chairperson Arnoldo K. Ventura (Jamaica)
Hilal A. Raza (Pakistan)
Marina Ranga (Romania)
Messanvi Gbeassor (Togo)

It was understood that one of the Vice-Chairpersons would also serve as Rapporteur.

Item 2. Substantive theme: Information and communication technologies for development

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1995/4, decided that the main substantive theme that will constitute the focus of the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development during the inter-sessional period 1995 - 1997 will be information and communication technologies and their implications for development. It further decided that panels or working groups be set up to analyse, elaborate and make recommendations on issues related to information and communication technologies, possibly including:

(a) Analysis of the application of information technologies in different groups of countries with a view to making recommendations to enhance the diffusion of information technologies in key sectors of their economies;

(b) The implications of the revolutionary improvements in the cost effectiveness of information technologies for the development of a global information infrastructure;

(c) Implications for the promotion of sustainable development, including the sustainable use of natural resources and the reduction of environmental degradation;

(d) The implications of such improvements for meeting basic human needs more effectively, such as education, health, water and food;

(e) The effect of information and communication technologies on social cohesion, economic growth and cultural values, including such issues as gender, employment, small-scale economic activities, production capability, improved governance and increased participation in the decision-making process;

(f) Public policy, legal, regulatory, institutional, market, human resources and infrastructural requirements for the diffusion and application of information and communication technologies;

(g) Examination of the programmes of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system that relate to the global information and communication infrastructure and their impacts, and the ways in which improved coordination and new avenues to be opened up for the coalition of resources could better assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in gaining more effective access to information and communication technologies and participating to a greater extent in the development and application of information technology; and,

(h) Assessment of experiences and progress made with regard to access to networks, such as INTERNET, by scientific and technical institutions in developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies for Development (E/CN.16/1997/4)

Item 3. Science, technology and innovation policy reviews

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1995/4, requested the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to liaise in establishing a programme of policy reviews on science, technology and innovation policy for interested countries. It also requested the Commission to consider providing advisory inputs, analytical support and evaluation, as need be, in the carrying out of such country reviews. It further requested the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to explore the possibilities of contributing to the funding of such activities from its centrally controlled funds.

Documentation

Note by the Secretary-General on the implementation of the programme on science, technology and innovation policy reviews. (E/CN.16/1997/5)

Item 4. Action arising from the second session

At its second session, the Commission dealt with three main themes, namely (i) Technology for small-scale economic activities to address the basic needs of low-income populations[1]; (ii) The gender implications of science and technology for developing countries[2]; and, (iii) The science and technology

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[1]. Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Panel on Technology for Small-scale Economic Activities to Address the Basic Needs of Low-income Populations (E/CN.16/1995/2).

[2]. Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Panel on Gender Implications of Science and Technology for Developing Countries (E/CN.16/1995/3).

aspects of the sectoral issue to be discussed by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1995: land management[3].

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1995/4, decided that the Commission should assist the United Nations system in identifying and promoting demonstration activities and programmes, involving different countries from diverse regions, that can be replicated and that apply science and technology for the satisfaction of basic needs, and recommended that the operational mechanisms of the United Nations system, including the Department of Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, the regional commissions and other relevant organizations, such as UNDP, disseminate information and facilitate the application of science and technology for satisfying basic needs.

The Council further requested the Secretary-General and United Nations organs and bodies to consider and take the necessary action to implement the recommendations addressed to the United Nations system in the report of the Panel on the Gender Implications of Science and Technology for Development of Developing Countries and to report thereon to the Commission at its subsequent sessions. It also recommended that all Governments adopt the Declaration of Intent on Gender, Science and Technology for Sustainable Human Development, conduct reviews of the national situation regarding gender and science and technology through special committees within or outside existing suitable mechanisms, formulate action plans, and report publicly and to the Commission on the progress achieved with the goals of the Declaration of Intent by the end of 1996 and 1998.

The Council also recommended that the principles set out in the report of the Panel on the Science and Technology Aspects of the Sectoral Issue on science and technology for integrated land management be further elaborated to provide guidelines for the application of technologies that support integrated land management under site- and region-specific conditions, and, for that purpose, invited FAO, UNEP, UNCHS (Habitat) and IFAD, in cooperation with regional commissions, where appropriate, to elaborate such guidelines and work together with a view to redesigning programmes to address specific land management problems and assisting developing countries and economies in transition implementing such programmes and sharing the information thus obtained.

The Council also recommended that a coalition of resources should focus on specific themes and common goals among recipients, donors and international financing institutions, including the World Bank and the regional development banks; that such themes and common goals should be based on voluntary and informal mechanisms that promote the full interaction of both donors and recipients. It also recommended that the Commission should provide a forum for the exchange of views and interaction among partners in different networks and coordination schemes in the area of science and technology for development -- a forum that could be held either as a segment of its biennial sessions or as an inter-sessional activity.

Recognizing the importance of clean and safe energy technologies in the pursuit of sustainable development, the Council, in the same resolution, recommended that the Commission's secretariat, in consultation with the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and other relevant international bodies, submit to the Commission at its third session an issues note that should identify scientific and technological aspects of sustainable energy systems that might be considered by the Commission in defining its future work programme.

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[3]. Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Panel on the Science and Technology Aspects of Land Management (E/CN.16/1995/4).

Documentation

Comprehensive note on implementation and progress made on decisions taken at the second session of the Commission, including follow-up work on technology for basic needs, gender and land management (E/CN.16/1997/8)

Report on coalition of resources (E/CN.16/1997/6)

Issues note on energy technology (E/CN.16/1997/3)

Item 5. Consideration of ways and means of commemorating in 1999 the twentieth anniversary of the of the Vienna Conference on Science and Technology for Development and the vision of the United Nations role in the area of science and technology for development

The Council, in its resolution 1995/4, invited the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to give consideration to ways and means of taking advantage of the twentieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, held in Vienna from 20 to 31 August 1979, for the formulation of a common vision for the future contribution of science and technology for development.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat (E/CN.16/1997/7)

Item 6. Role and activities of the Commission regarding the coordination of science and technology for development

The General Assembly, in its resolution 34/218 of 19 December 1979, decided that the former Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development, whose mandate was assumed by the CSTD[4], shall assist it in formulating policy guidelines for the harmonization of policies of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in regard to scientific and technological activities.

The Economic and Social Council also recalled the agreed conclusions on coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to science and technology for development adopted at its substantive session of 1994[5], and in that context decided that the Commission, in its substantive work, should maximize coordination in undertaking its inter-sessional studies on specific issues by relating actively to competent United Nations organs and agencies, as well as other multilateral organizations.

Documentation

Note by the Secretariat (E/CN.16/1997/2)

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[4] See General Assembly resolution 46/235, annex, of 13 April, 1992.

[5] See Official records of the General Assembly, Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No.3 (A/49/3/Rev.1), chap. III, sect. A.

Item 7. Election of the Chairperson and other officers for the fourth session of the Commission

The Commission may wish to follow the practice adopted at its previous sessions by electing a Chairperson, and four Vice-Chairpersons for its fourth session. It is understood that one of the Vice-Chairpersons would also serve as Rapporteur.

Item 8. Provisional agenda and organization of work for the fourth session of the Commission

The Commission will have before it a note by the Secretariat on the provisional agenda for its fourth session, the documents to be submitted under each item and the organization of its work.

9. Other matters

10. Adoption of the report of the Commission on its third session.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/235, and Economic and Social Council decision 1992/218, the Commission on Science and Technology submits its report to the Council.

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COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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Item 6 of the provisional agenda

ROLE AND ACTIVITIES OF THE COMMISSION REGARDING THE COORDINATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

GE.97-50424

1. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), having superseded the former Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development and having assumed its wider mandates, was also given the specific task of coordinating the activities of the United Nations system in the area of science and technology for development and of making recommendations, if so required, on how the coordination and effectiveness of these activities could best be pursued. In line with this mandate, the issue of coordination has continued to receive the attention of the Commission as manifested in its sessional deliberations or its inter-sessional activities.

A. First session of the Commission

2. At its first session in April 1993, The Commission for Science and Technology for Development for the first time took up the issues of coordination and cooperation in science and technology within the United Nations system. After its deliberations, the Commission expressed the view that the objective of system-wide coordination in science and technology should be to create synergies. Since many agencies were involved with science and technology, the Commission considered that inadequate communication had often led to unnecessary duplication which could be remedied by the creation of an information network as a means of information exchange and dissemination within the United Nations system. As a first step towards performing its coordinating role, the Commission adopted a resolution entitled "Activities of the United Nations system in science and technology for development" in which it requested the Secretary-General to prepare for its second session a report on the progress achieved in coordination and cooperation of the science and technology activities of the United Nations system.

3. The subject of coordination was also raised by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of July 1993. Following its review of the issue, the Council requested the Commission (resolution 1993/71) to consider, at its second session, the outcome of the coordination segment of the substantive session of the Council of 1994. In that same resolution, the Council also requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing an analysis and action-oriented proposals for improving coordination mechanisms of the organs, programmes and specialized agencies that are involved in the science and technology activities of the United Nations system.

Inter-sessional activities

4. Apart from responding to the above-mentioned resolutions, the Commission had also selected a number of themes for its inter-sessional activities deemed to be of particular importance not only in their own right but also from the perspective of coordination and cooperation, given that a number of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system are involved in these areas. Among these themes are:

- Gender, science technology and development;
- Science and technology aspects of integrated land management;
- Science and technology for small-scale economic activities for meeting the basic needs of the low-income populations.

5. The Commission had set up Working Groups in order to deepen analytical work on each of the substantive themes for submission to the second session of the Commission. In undertaking their respective tasks, the Working Groups had sought, whenever possible, cooperation and substantive inputs from relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system.

6. In the case of the theme on gender, science, technology and development, the Working Group had requested the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to review the activities of selected United Nations agencies and organizations. On the basis of the information received from the respondent agencies and organizations, UNIFEM prepared a report containing a number of recommendations aimed at enhancing coordination and cooperation among the various agencies and organizations within the United Nations system dealing with gender, science, technology and development. These recommendations were incorporated in the wider report of the Working Group on Gender, Science, Technology and Development, which was submitted to the Commission at its second session.

7. In the area of science and technology for land management, FAO had provided substantive inputs to the preparation of the Working Group's report. For its part, FAO organized a workshop on the issue of land management (November 1995) in which other agencies such as UNEP and IFAD participated. The UNCTAD secretariat has been in touch with FAO regarding the preparation and outcome of this workshop.

8. In the case of science and technology for small-scale economic activities for meeting the basic needs of low-income populations, a number of organizations and agencies had been involved, in various degrees, with the activities undertaken under this theme, culminating in the report of the Working Group. Amongst them are WHO, ILO, FAO, IFAD, UNIDO, UNESCO, UNECA, ESCAP, ECLAC, UNDP, UNU/INTECH, the United Nations Department for Development Support and Management Services (UNDDSMS).

B. Second session of the Commission

9. At its second session, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development considered the reports prepared in response to its own request, or that of the Council, and in particular document 1994/1, containing the agreed conclusions of the Council on the question of coordination and cooperation. In reviewing the science and technology-related activities reported by the agencies of the United Nations system, the Commission noted that the possibilities for overlapping mandates and programmes could not be excluded. In this regard, the Commission considered that the purpose of coordination should be to promote the complementarity of the various activities while avoiding duplication as much as possible.

10. The subject of coordination was again taken up by the Council at its substantive session of June-July 1995. In adopting resolution 1995/4, the Council recalled the agreed conclusions on coordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations system related to science and technology for development adopted at its substantive session of 1994. In this context, the Council decided that the Commission, in its substantive work, should maximize coordination in undertaking its inter-sessional studies on specific issues by relating to competent United Nations organs and agencies, as well as multilateral organizations. These considerations were to be reflected in the ensuing

inter-sessional activity, whenever the opportunity arose.

Inter-sessional activities entailing coordination and cooperation

11. Having selected, at its second session, information and communication technologies as the main substantive theme for its inter-sessional activity, the Commission requested its Working Group on Information Technology to prepare for its third session a policy-oriented report on this theme, which should include information on the activities of the United Nations system in this area. The Working Group held its first meeting in Cartagena (Colombia) in January 1996 for the purpose of outlining the structure and scope of the report. The deliberations of the Working Group benefited from the substantive inputs provided by representatives from other agencies and organizations such as UNESCO, United Nations University Institute for New Technologies (UNU/INTECH), United Nations University Institute for Software Technologies (UNU/IIST), and the World Bank. ITU had also provided statistical data for the report. In addition, the secretariat was able to incorporate in this report information received from the various agencies and organizations regarding their activities for science and technology for development. To the extent that agencies are now better informed about each other's activities, this could open a window of opportunity for a greater coherence through cooperation among the agencies and organizations in the United Nations system in this specific area.

12. The Commission's Science, Technology and Investment Policy Review (STIP) of Colombia was another activity in which the Commission benefited from the participation of UNIDO.